



The State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner

April 2, 2008

The Honorable Candace Bouchard, Chairwoman
House Public Works and Highways Committee
Legislative Office Building Room 201
Concord, NH 03301

RE: SB 452, relative to transportation planning

Dear Chairwoman Bouchard,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify concerning SB 452, which proposes strategic additions and changes to existing statutes pertaining to state, regional and local planning to encourage improved coordination of land use and transportation planning. The Department of Environmental Services (DES) supports the enactment of SB 452 because these changes support ongoing efforts to better integrate and coordinate environmental, land use, and transportation planning and encourage sustainable future development in New Hampshire.

Improved coordination of land use policies and transportation investments at state, regional, and local levels is essential to promote sustainable development patterns and protect New Hampshire's environment. As discussed in our testimony on SB 396, global climate change is one of the greatest environmental challenges facing New Hampshire and the transportation sector is one of the largest contributors of greenhouse gas emissions in New Hampshire and world-wide. To significantly reduce emissions from the transportation sector requires a coordinated approach to increase the fuel efficiency of individual vehicles, make the existing transportation system function more efficiently, and reduce the demand and need for driving vehicles. Improved coordination with land use planning, as called for by SB 452, is essential to achieve the latter two objectives.

Land use policies and the resulting pattern of development can have a significant effect on the number of vehicle miles traveled, particularly by influencing the availability and practicality of alternative travel options such as walking or public transit (e.g., bus or rail service). Areas of development that are more compact, incorporate a variety of different uses, and are designed to be conducive to walking and biking generate fewer (and shorter) vehicle trips per household, on average, than areas with a more spread-out pattern of development with widely separated uses. Additionally, regions characterized by distinct areas of higher-density, more compact development are also more easily served by public transit, such as local shuttles, further reducing the need for individual vehicle travel. These are just two of the many ways in which land use can influence our transportation system and ultimately affect pollutant emissions and the environment of New Hampshire.

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Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 452. If you have any questions or need additional information regarding this bill, please contact me at 271-2958 or DES Environmental Quality Impact Planner Carolyn Russell at 271-3010.

Sincerely,



Thomas S. Burack
Commissioner

cc: Senator Martha Fuller Clark
Senator Margaret Hassan
Senator Harold Janeway
Senator Jacalyn Cilley
Senator Peter Burling
Senator Molly Kelly
Representative David Borden
Representative Otto Grote
Representative Judith Spang
Representative Linda Foster
Acting Commissioner D. Jeffrey Brillhart